



The Governor's Gossip

August 2026
v. 44, no. 3

**Newsletter of the Governor Wolf Historical Society,
Owner of the Wolf Academy Historic Site, East Allen Township**

GWHS Welcomes Recent Donations

As an all volunteer organization, the Governor Wolf Historical Society is always thrilled to receive donations which help us explain our local history, demonstrate historical skills, and enhance the visitor experience at our historical site. During the past months, generous individuals have given us kitchen items, a garden bench, and Knauss School class photos (see page 4 for this donation).

Early Kitchen Items

By Kathy Wilhelm

We are pleased to announce a significant donation of 40 hearth cooking and other items to the Governor Wolf Historical Society by Jan and Dalton Semmel. The Semmels were past board members of the Society prior to their move out of state. They were very active members, with Jan serving as president and Dalton serving as treasurer.

Their collection of hearth cooking tools includes cast iron Dutch ovens, a tin kitchen (reflector oven), assorted cast iron pans, a griddle, and wrought iron items such as a toaster, adjustable trivet, hanging pan, fry pan, and assorted cooking tools, accessories, and an outdoor Cresset Lamp.

This donation will go a long way toward setting up our Hearth Room and other areas with needed items that can be permanently displayed and used when we have events. We are the grateful recipients of their kind generosity.



The hearth cooking items donated by the Semmels are displayed in the kitchen wing of the Ralston-McKeen House. Photo by Kathy Wilhelm.

Garden Bench



The new Herb & Pleasure Garden bench donated by John and Linda Kortz invites visitors to sit and savor the outdoor garden oasis. Photo by Barb Wiemann

Herb & Pleasure Garden Benefits from Master Gardener Volunteers

By Patti Corey

The Herb & Pleasure Garden has been looking really lush with the monthly care by the volunteers from Master Gardeners and the Gov. Wolf Historical Society. New plants have been added to fill in some empty spots and more additions are planned. Thanks to Linda and John Kortz for the donation of a beautiful bench which now invites sitting and enjoying the calm and scented garden.

We are planning to add roses to the center circle in the garden and would happily accept any donation of grandiflora roses.

If anyone is interested in volunteering to help tend the garden, we usually meet the second or third Monday of the month working from 9 a.m. until noon or whenever a volunteer needs to leave. Please contact Patti at Lavnderhil@gmail.com to be added to the text list for notification of the next workday

See page 4 for news of a donation of Knauss School class photos

Governor Wolf Historical Society

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This newsletter is published four times a year (February, May, August and November) as a service to our members and the public by the Society. Contributions are encouraged and may be sent to the editor before the first day of the publication month. However the Society reserves the right to select and edit all content.

Monthly Meetings

The Society holds monthly meetings at 6:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month in the Monocacy School, located at our historic site, 6600 Jacksonville Road, Bath, PA 18014. All members and interested individuals are invited to attend.

We Want Your Email Address!

Updates about our events and activities are emailed between newsletters. To be added to our email distribution list, please send your email address to Kathy Wilhelm at gwhs1958@gmail.com. If you supplied the Society with your email, and you are not getting emails about upcoming activities and events, contact Kathy at the same email.

Historic Site Rentals

The Governor Wolf Historical Society is fully open and ready to rent out our buildings and 3 1/2 acre grounds to host your next birthday party, baby shower, meeting, or even a small wedding. We currently rent out the historic Wolf Academy and Monocacy School and the beautiful surrounding gardens. There is plenty of parking in the adjacent grassy meadow. For more information about rental opportunities, please contact Abby Spencer at spencerabby@yahoo.com or 610-428-3975.

GWHS Wreath Party Classes

Saturday Nov. 28, 9 a.m.-noon or 1-3 p.m. and Sunday Nov. 29, 1-3 p.m.

By Linda Kortz

Gather your family and friends! All supplies -- mixed fresh greens, cones, assorted decorations and huge bows -- will be ready for you! Bring any special things you want to add to your wreath, and we'll help you attach them! Everyone must bring clippers, one glue gun for every two people. Best of all, the clean-up is not in your house!



Cost is \$40 per person. Call me at 610-905-0007 for questions/reservations. Leave a message with your name. For groups, select just one point person to mail one check to cover the total for your-group.

Plastic ware, napkins, coffee, tea, soft drinks and Christmas jingles provided

Become A Member

We Are An All Volunteer Society And Need Your Support

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

GOVERNOR WOLF HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

You can help preserve our community's rich cultural heritage by becoming a member of the Governor Wolf Historical Society! Return this application with a check payable to Governor Wolf Historical Society. If family, please include all names. Mail to: Governor Wolf Historical Society, P.O. Box 134, Bath PA 18014. Or go online at www.govwolf.org and join online

Individual \$25.00; Family \$40.00;
Student \$10.00

Restoration \$75.00; Monocacy \$100.00

Governor's Guild \$200.00

Individual Lifetime \$500.00

Senior Lifetime (62+years) \$250.00

From Our President



Hello everyone!

As we celebrate 250 years since the Declaration of Independence set our nation on its course, it's worth remembering how deeply our own community is woven into that story. Governor George Wolf -- born right here in Allen Township (now East Allen Township) -- dedicated his life to public service, ultimately championing the Common School Law that guaranteed education to every child in Pennsylvania. His legacy reminds us that the spirit of 1776 didn't end in Philadelphia; it lived on in the classrooms, town halls, and farms of Northampton County. This milestone year is a chance for all of us to honor that heritage and continue strengthening the civic foundations he helped build.

Bob Byshe

Preparing for New Ralston-McKeen Walkway

With the successful completion of the parking lot repaving and landscaping project, the Society is looking forward to the installation of a brick walkway from the parking lot to the Ralston-McKeen House. The current grassy walk is uneven, muddy in wet weather, and difficult to shovel in winter.

Fortunately, Adam Yensha, a Scout from Troop 40, has stepped forward to undertake this project as part of his efforts to earn his Eagle rank. Adam has located bricks to match the Wolf Academy patio and the existing walkway between the Academy and House. He is currently raising funds to support the costs. The walk will include an area to erect signage so that visitors can learn about our historic buildings.



Slavery ... (continued from page 5)

Census Records

When the 1790 census was taken, Northampton County was home to 133 nonwhite free persons and 23 slaves, less than half the number registered 10 years before. Eleven of these slaves lived in townships north of the Blue Mountain and six in Easton. Allen Township, the municipality with the largest population in the county (1,457 people), included no slaves and five free nonwhites. They lived in the households of Jacob Bashler, Peter Bisel, Thomas Horner, James Taylor, and Frederick Warmkisel.

Craft Social Open to All 1st & 3rd Thursdays

By Carol Bear

Remember that half-finished knitted scarf in the spare bedroom? Or the art project you never finished? This is your chance! Join like-minded people in the meeting room at the Society and get it done! We meet twice a month, the first and third Thursdays from 10 a.m. to noon. All are welcome to attend and any craft is invited. Count on good conversation and great productivity. A \$5 donation is appreciated to defray costs.

Free Historic Site Tours

Sept. 19, Oct. 17, Nov. 21

1 to 3 p.m.

The Society offers free tours of our three historic buildings, grounds, and new museum on the third Saturday of each month, April through November, from 1-3 p.m. No reservations are needed.

Knowledgeable guides will discuss the history of each building, Gov. George Wolf, and provide details about items in the museum.

Request A Tour

The Society is always willing to provide tours to individuals, families, school classes, youth groups, and social organizations at other times. To schedule a tour, call 610-837-9015 or email gwhs1958@gmail.com

In 1800, Allen Township's residents included eight free nonwhites and one slave. The only slave was owned by Thomas Horner. Could this be the same person listed with Horner's household as a free person in 1790? Was the status of this individual misclassified as a slave? For the first time, a nonwhite person, identified as Black Peggy, was recorded as a head of household; Peggy lived alone.

By 1810, Allen Township was home to two free nonwhite households headed by males - William Jonston (3 residents) and Samuel [blurry last name] (2 residents). The only other nonwhite individual lived in the household of Robert Brown, the owner of the Friendship Tree.

Class Photograph Donations

Thanks to Carol Bear, the Society has acquired two photographs of school classes from the Knauss School on Nor-Bath Blvd. (now the East Allen Township Municipal Building). Handwritten information on the backs of the photos indicates that they belonged to Bernadine Hess, and are from 1941 and the 1944/1945 school years. Unfortunately, the students and teachers are not identified.

The two room Knauss School educated children in first through eighth grades. Both photos are the of fifth-eighth grade classroom. The 1944/45 photo shows that the teacher was in charge of 49 students.

The Society is always interested in acquiring any items related to education in East Allen Township. We are happy to make copies of photos and paper items if you wish to retain the originals.

If you can identify any of these students or the teacher, please contact Barb Wiemann, 610-262-6977 or blwiemann@gmail.com.

1944/45 Knauss School, fifth-eighth grades



Passport to History Day

By Annette Vliet

Governor Wolf Historical Society proudly participated in the Lehigh Valley Passport to History Day on Saturday, June 27. We welcomed visitors of all ages to explore hands-on traditions from early American life. Throughout the day, children and adults enjoyed “make-it-n-take” activities, crafting herbal wreaths, decorating punched tin plates, and assembling peanut butter cone bird feeders — simple, timeless projects that connected modern families with the skills of earlier generations.

A highlight of the event was a special presentation by Master Gardener **Patricia Corey**, who shared her program, “*Herbs in Early Gardens*.” Corey discussed the essential plants our ancestors cultivated to support their health, flavor their cooking, and enrich their daily lives. Her talk offered guests a deeper appreciation for the practical beauty of historic gardens and the knowledge passed down through centuries.

Passport to History Day once again brought together history lovers, families and curious newcomers for a memorable celebration of heritage, craftsmanship and community.



Sharon Fournier demonstrates tin punching to Passport visitors, who then created their own designs. Photo by Annette Vliet.

The Lakeside Pencil Sharpener

By Bob Bysher

The Lakeside pencil sharpener was invented by Frank B. Canode and produced by the Lakeside Specialty Company, Chicago, Illinois. The early patent application was filed on March 19, 1901, but was not granted until November 14, 1911. The Lakeside was marketed by Eberhard Faber and listed as the “Sole Agent”.

The large, rotary flat blade cutting cylinder (made of case-hardened steel) was said to achieve the perfect point without wasting the pencil. It was also noted in advertisements that a new pencil could be sharpened in 15 revolutions of the crank.

The pencil was inserted into a chuck where it could be tightened down with a thumb screw. The hand-painted gold pin striping and designs varied with the sharpeners. The Lakeside was offered with two different decal patterns: Floral and Geometric. The base contains a small drawer for the shavings.

The Lakeside retailed between \$4.25 and \$5.50.

The Lakeside Pencil Sharpener was marketed during 1904-11. The Lakeside has a 2.75” diameter cylindrical cutting wheel with 60 diagonal cutting edges on the periphery. It was advertised in 1904 as having “Ten times the cutting surface of any other sharpener.” This is another large machine—5 7/8” tall and 3 lb. 14 oz.



Lehigh Valley Passport to History is a partnership of historic sites and resources in and around Pennsylvania’s Lehigh and Northampton counties. Visit the web site lvhistory.org to see the wide variety of activities, events and exhibits available from partner organizations.

Slavery in Northampton County

This year, as we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and its ideals of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, it seems appropriate to consider the issue of slavery. We tend to focus on the states that formed the Confederacy and conveniently forget that enslaved people lived and worked in Pennsylvania, Northampton County and Allen Township.

There were slaves in what is now Pennsylvania from the advent of European settlement. The earliest Dutch and Swedish settlers owned African slaves. William Penn owned slaves. By 1750, there were about 6,000 slaves in the colony (out of a total population of approximately 120,000 people).

1780 Gradual Abolition Act

But there was sentiment against slavery. On March 1, 1780, by a vote of 34 to 21, the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed "An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery." The act stated that since Pennsylvania had been freed from the tyranny of Great Britain, the state wanted to "extend a portion of that freedom to others." Primary opposition to the act came from German representatives from heavily German counties. While Germans owned few slaves, there was a fear among this ethnic group that thousands of freed slaves would impact their place in society.

Provisions of the Act

The act did not immediately free anyone. The gradual emancipation approach meant that slavery continued to exist in Pennsylvania for decades. The 1840 census recorded 64 slaves in the state; the last slave was either freed or died by 1850.

The act outlawed bringing new slaves into Pennsylvania. Non-residents could temporarily bring slaves into the state for no more than six months. George Washington used this provision to bring slaves to Philadelphia while he was President.

Any child born to a slave after the date of the act was legally freed upon reaching age 28. Anyone already enslaved in the state on March 1, 1780 remained a slave for life, provided that their owner registered them with the county. If not registered, the person was legally freed.

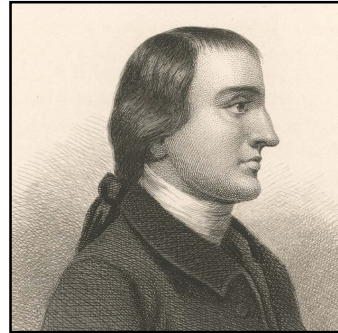
Northampton County Register

In accordance with the provisions of the act, each county compiled a register of enslaved people and their enslavers. In Northampton County, between September and November 1780, Robert Levers (who is credited with reading the Declaration in Easton on July 8,

culture. Ten owners, with 17 slaves, lived in Easton and Bethlehem. With occupations such as storekeepers, gentlemen, tavern keeper, tanner and miller, these owners likely used their slaves as domestic servants or industrial workers. No slaves were registered in present day Carbon and Lehigh Counties. The remaining eight owners, with 13 slaves, lived in five Northampton County townships – Forks, Bethlehem, Lower Saucon, Mount Bethel and Allen.

Prominent Owners

In Easton, George Taylor, the acclaimed local signer of the Declaration of Independence, registered two slaves, Tom and Sam, each 30 years old. To enroll them, Taylor wrote a letter to Levers requesting they be included. He then gave the letter to Sam, who walked to the Courthouse, hand delivering the instrument that ensured his enslavement for the rest of his life.



George Taylor, signer of the Declaration of Independence

As might be expected, slave owners were leading and wealthy citizens. Merchant Myer Hart regis-

tered five slaves, including three children ages six, five and three years old. Peter Kachline, who became the first burgess of Easton, enrolled Joe, an 11-year-old boy. Although the Moravian Church chose not to enroll any of their slaves, two Moravians who lived in Bethlehem enrolled four individuals.

Allen Township

The one slave registered in Allen Township was owned by William McNair, Esq., a farmer, who registered Robert, age 29, in March, 1781. McNair was a Scots-Irish Presbyterian who lived in the Craig Settlement. He was a justice of the peace and during the Revolution, served as an agent for forfeited properties seized from Loyalists and those who refused to sign the Oath of Allegiance to the new government. Robert's fate is unknown. In the 1790 census, McNair's household did not include any nonwhite members. No record of Robert's sale, manumission or death has been found.

Ralston Servant or Slave?

Samuel Ralston, the father of James Ralston, who built the house

that the Society owns, died in October 1785, five years after the Gradual Abolition Act. In the listing of the assets of his estate, the first item was "the

Wm McNair Esq.	Farmer	Allen	Robert	29	male	March 3 rd 1781
Theophilus Hanson	Tavernkeeper	Easton	Ludjo	21	male	Novemb ^r 29 th 1782
John Mulhollen	Esquire	Easton	Benjamin	3 rd 26 th	male	Nov ^r 13 th 1797

A portion of page 2 the Northampton County register showing the entry for Robert, who was owned by Allen Township resident William McNair.

1776) entered the names of 25 residents who owned 55 slaves into the county list. Three more owners and slaves were added in March 1891, November 1782 and November 1797. There were 38 males and 20 females on the list; ages ranged from 2 months to 75 years.

Geographical Distribution

The residences of the slave owners were clustered in several areas of the county. Ten of the enslavers, with almost half of the slaves, lived in what are now Monroe, Pike and Wayne counties. Nine of these owners were farmers whose slaves were likely engaged in agri-

culture. Ten owners, with 17 slaves, lived in Easton and Bethlehem. With occupations such as storekeepers, gentlemen, tavern keeper, tanner and miller, these owners likely used their slaves as domestic servants or industrial workers. No slaves were registered in present day Carbon and Lehigh Counties. The remaining eight owners, with 13 slaves, lived in five Northampton County townships – Forks, Bethlehem, Lower Saucon, Mount Bethel and Allen.

(Continued on page 3)

GOVERNOR WOLF HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 134
BATH, PA 18014

Return Service Requested

Upcoming Events!!

*Crafts Social -- 1st & 3rd Thursdays
see page 3*

*Open House Tours -- 3rd Saturdays
see page 3*

*Wreath Classes -- Nov. 27 & 28
see page 2*

Would you like your old house considered for the 2026 Gov. Wolf House Tour? Do you know about an old house that we should consider for the tour? Call the Society at 610-837-9015

Save The Dates!

Complete information about these events will be available in our November newsletter and on our website

44th Annual Christmas House Tour -- Dec. 5
Friday Candlelight Tour -- December 4
Our theme this year is "Stars & Stripes"

Holiday History Fest
December 5 and 6

Holiday Candlelight Concert
December 13

New Public School in East Allen

After a hiatus of 43 years, East Allen Township is again home to a public school building. The new East Allen Elementary School, serving pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade, opened to students on August 24. The new school has a capacity of about 700 students. Opening day attendance was approximately 550 students who reside in all four district townships.

The three story building has 22 classrooms, ten small group instruction rooms, ten special area subject rooms, two pre-K rooms, and seven autistic support rooms, in addition to the gym and cafeteria. A walkway connects to the district offices.

The Northampton Area School District closed the last of East Allen's schools in 1983 when the district moved its alternative education program from the three room-Monocacy School. The two room Knauss School had previously closed in 1968 when the George Wolf School opened in Bath.



Main entrance of the East Allen Elementary School facing New Seemsville Rd. Administration and technology offices are on the left side of building. Photos by Barb Wiemann



Gym with stage.



Courtyard between classroom wings



Typical classroom